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## Sense and security

### **Peggy Weigle's job is to defeat hackers and battle cybercrime**

**Douglas E. Caldwell**

In author Robert Ludlum's current best-seller, "The Paris Option," a crazed militarist uses a supercomputer to hack into U.S. military, communications and power grid Web sites and wreak havoc.

While the computer in the book is fictional, the possibility of such incredible damage is a real and growing danger, says Peggy Weigle, president and chief executive officer of Sanctum, Inc., a maker of software designed to detect and stop hackers in their tracks.

"Based on the activities we do at Sanctum -- we've audited well over 300 major corporation including telcos, utility companies, the financial services industry and the like -- we know that 97 percent of all the sites we have audited we have been able to break into," Ms. Weigle says.

Mr. Ludlum's thriller starts with a hacker breaking into the power grid managed by the California Independent System Operator and blacking out most of the state. Not far-fetched, at all, Ms. Weigle says.

"We have been able to get on the power grid, for example, to a place where you could get to the maintenance schedules," she says. "And if you have the maintenance schedule of a power grid and you're a terrorist, you can maybe figure out the best time to launch an attack or the best time to penetrate further."

Ms. Weigle is seen as an expert in Web security.

"She's probably correct in the sense that large bureaucracies can be vulnerable because not all our departments are up to speed," says U.S. Rep. Mike Honda, D-San Jose, who picked Ms. Weigle to serve on the special Silicon Valley Blue Ribbon Task Force on Aviation Security and Technology, which made a series of security improvement suggestions in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. "For those of us in policy-making, she is one of the bright stars and resources."

Ms. Weigle says heads of private companies need to be just as concerned.

"One of my big concerns is that corporations are not doing enough from a security perspective," she says. "Hackers are a very determined bunch and they spend 95 percent of their time exploring a site figuring out how to break in, and then 5 percent breaking in."

Ms. Weigle was introduced to Sanctum in 1999 by a mentor with whom she'd worked at Arbor Software -- John Dillon, now chairman of Sanctum's board and CEO of Navis LLC of Oakland, a maker of software products for handling shipping containers.

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08/06/2002

"While creativity and talent is important for success, you also need a degree of discipline," he says. "She's very pragmatic. It's always about what she can do for the company or the people who work for her. She is someone who is sort of selfless."

When Ms. Weigle started at Sanctum, it had just six employees in the United States plus 30 programmers in Israel. As CEO, she had to put a management team in place to start growing the privately held company.

"The most important thing is hiring the right people, getting the absolutely best team in place," she says. "The second most important thing is getting customers."

When not dealing with Web security issues, Ms. Weigle often can be found at home -- outside Albuquerque, N.M., where her husband owns a business there, making complex high-tech cabling for the government's nuclear weapons laboratories. He could not relocate, so Ms. Weigle became "one of Southwest [airlines]'s best customers" as she flies home on weekends where she and her husband enjoy horseback riding.

Ms. Weigle's interest in horses goes back to her childhood on a New England farm. "I was one of those little girls who knew she wanted a pony at 3 and had to wait until I was 8," she says.

After earning her degree in philosophy from the University of Massachusetts, she managed classical music organizations in Boston.

"We were commissioning composers and I actually produced an opera at MIT," she says.

Then it was a stint as a telemarketer for Pilot Executive Software in Boston. She rose to outside sales and finally sales management and made her way West with a sales position with the former Arbor Software, now part of Hyperion, a Sunnyvale software company.

"Peggy is a very balanced person, which is a great attribute for a CEO," says Dan Fishback, chief executive officer of San Carlos-based DemandTec Inc. He worked with her at Arbor Software and later at Hyperion. "People gravitate to her. People like to exceed for Peggy."

That view is echoed by another Silicon Valley leader who can compare Ms. Weigle's style to other top executives from firsthand observation.

"The thing that really sets the successful executive apart is a combination of passion, humility and charisma. She has a nice combination of all three," says Bill Binch, who worked with Ms. Weigle at Arbor Software and Hyperion and is now a member of the boards of directors of a dozen Silicon Valley companies.

"She's a bulldog when it comes to knocking down walls to get from here to there," Mr. Binch says. "She lends sophistication and class. She's one of the young emerging superstar CEOs."

One career aspect has escaped notice, she says. In college she worked as a dog handler for dog shows.

"At the end of the day it's all about selling," she says, "Whether you're showing a dog or you're selling a concert or you're convincing a musician to play for a certain fee or you're selling software to a major corporation."

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